

**Plan Conformance and Categorical Exclusion Determination
for the
Burnt River Fuels Reduction Project**

Dear Interested Citizen:

January 23, 2004

A Plan Conformance and Categorical Exclusion Determination (OR-030-2004-006) has been prepared by the Vale District, Bureau of Land Management for fuels treatment activities in the Burnt River area (see enclosed map). Public and private landowners and interested publics were consulted via personal contacts and letter beginning in the spring of 2003 to solicit input into proposed activities. This letter and attached document is to inform you of the decision to treat fuels within the project area and the treatments that will be implemented.

Project Area Description

The project proposal area is located on BLM administered lands located in the north ½ of the Burnt River Geographical Unit (GU) described in the Baker RMP. The project area is surrounded by private lands to the north and east with the Wallowa Whitman National Forest on the west boundary. The area consists of juniper woodlands, rangelands, and scattered blocks of coniferous forest which are dominated by ponderosa pine on southerly aspects and mixed conifer stands of ponderosa pine, western larch, white fir, and Douglas-fir on northerly aspects.

Purpose and Need for the Action

The project area is reflective of many sites within the Pacific Northwest where overstocked stands, ladder fuels, and the buildup of ground fuels have set the stage for catastrophic stand replacement fires. Topography is rugged with slopes often exceeding 50% making access and firefighting difficult.

This proposal is the initial phase of a larger assessment that will analyze hazardous fuels, forest and rangeland health, wildlife, and riparian concerns within the north ½ of the Burnt River GU. These preliminary fuel reduction treatments are being initiated now in order to take advantage of funding and begin the process of reducing fuels and the associated chance of catastrophic wildfire. Additional range and forest inventory and assessment work in the GU is planned next field season. More comprehensive issues and activities will be addressed after these assessments are completed.

The primary purpose of the project is to protect resource values by reducing fuel loads within the coniferous forested stands that currently impose a high risk of stand replacement fire and reintroduce the natural role of fire in these fire dependant ecosystems.

.

If have any questions concerning this project, please contact Dale Ekman at (541) 523-1322.

Sincerely,

s/Penelope Dunn Woods

Penelope Dunn Woods
Baker Field Office Manager

Encl.: Plan Conformance and Categorical Exclusion Determination, map of the project area